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ABSTRACT

Basic steps in planning outdoor education day camping programs are outlined to assist and to serve as a planning guide for teachers. Day camping programs are defined as usually consisting of an outdoor grade level environmental activity which provides all students within a particular grade the opportunity to be exposed to outdoor environmental learning experiences. The program planning is discussed in terms of (1) the organizational process: determining the curriculum content for the day camping program, incorporating a multi-disciplinary approach to program planning, and implementing the instructional program and schedule within a structured time period; (2) the orientation programs; and (3) the school policy. In the concluding comments it is stated that the day camping experiences provide the student with a greater appreciation and understanding of the local environmental problems that are in existence closer to home. An 11-item bibliography is provided. (FF)

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BASIC STEPS IN PLANNING

OUTDOOR EDUCATION

DAY-CAMPING PROGRAMS

A Definitive Statement to Assist

Teachers Involved in Day-Camping

Programs

Prepared by the Nassau County Board of Cooperative Educational Services (BOCES)

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BASIC STEPS IN PLANNING OUTDOOR EDUCATION DAY-CAMPING PROGRAM

P R E F A C E

"Basic Steps in Planning Outdoor Education Day Camping Programs", proposes in this brief form, to define, assist and serve as a planning guide for teachers who for the first time will become involved in this phase of the environmental education program.

Basically, the question of what constitutes a day-camping program and in what form should such a program be organized and administered, poses a definite problem to many classroom teachers and curriculum coordinators.

It is for this reason that this basic guide came into being.

Harry C. Thompson
Director - BOCES
Outdoor Education Program

[1971]

BASIC STEPS IN PLANNING
OUTDOOR EDUCATION
DAY-CAMPING PROGRAMS

SCHOOL DAY-CAMPING DEFINED

Day-camping programs usually consist of an outdoor grade level environmental activity which provides all students within a particular grade, the opportunity to be exposed to outdoor environmental learning experiences. Classes are held at one or more outdoor environmental areas and the number of outdoor sessions will be determined by the size of the grade involved in the program. The number of students or classrooms which will participate in each outdoor session depends upon the following:

Size of the environmental area to be used.

The available natural instructional resources existing in the area.

The convenience by which numbers of teachers can be made available for the outdoor program at any one time.

Desired student group size for efficient instruction.

ORGANIZATIONAL PROCESS

DETERMINING CURRICULUM CONTENT FOR DAY-CAMPING PROGRAM -MULTI DISCIPLINARY APPROACH

The classroom teachers and students cooperatively plan and identify the subject matter which is to be contained in the course content. Subject matter that can best be taught and learned in the out of doors in the areas of ecology, geology, aquatic science, anthropology and astronomy, should be identified and placed within the proposed curriculum program. The most important and necessary prerequisite required of the classroom teachers and other participating staff personnel, is the visitation to the environmental

area prior to the pre-planning sessions. A visitation to the proposed outdoor site provides the teacher with a first hand observation of the existing natural resources and other instructional and organizational possibilities available. It further assists in familiarizing the teacher with the geographical position of the site which is necessary for efficient planning.

The Classroom teachers while involved in the process of determining curriculum content, should when ever necessary, seek out the services of other school staff personnel who can contribute to the development of the curriculum. (Curriculum specialists, science coordinators and department chairmen).

Instructional and learning situations can only be meaningful to the student if they relate directly to the curriculum and to the educational needs and interests of the participants. For this reason, it is important to provide for student participation in the total planning process.

MULTI-DISCIPLINARY APPROACH TO PROGRAM PLANNING

Many day-camping school planning groups have incorporated into their environmental curriculum programs the multi-disciplinary approach. Academic disciplines such as mathematics, art, social studies and music become an integral part of the curriculum, especially structured for learning experiences in the out of doors. The inclusion of the multi-disciplinary aspect into the environmental curriculum provides enrichment and diversity to the over all program. The broader and more diversified the day camping program tends to become, the greater the appeal to a larger number of students and their educational interests.

No better resources exist for those interested in the subject of art, than the out of doors. As a result of the use of adapted mathematical techniques to environmental teaching, the height of trees can be determined and the distance between mountain tops can be measured. Music in the out-of-doors is

a natural and can be applied in many impressive ways. Many academic disciplines can be adapted for instruction in the out-of-doors.

IMPLEMENTATION OF THE INSTRUCTIONAL PROGRAM AND SCHEDULE WITHIN A STRUCTURED TIME PERIOD

Following the completion of the planned curriculum course in environmental education, it is important to select outdoor sites and areas which contain the required resources for the implementation of the instructional program. Because of the need for a diversified number of natural resources for teaching purposes, a multiple number of areas may have to be considered from the stand point of their available resources. For example, to teach aquatic or marine science, a water location is needed, however, an ocean, beach or pond site may not contain the natural resources for instruction in other areas or phases of the curriculum. It is advantageous to locate a site which contains within its confines, a multiple number of available natural resources.

Each resource site (field ecology, forest ecology, aquatic and marine science, etc.) within an environmental area can be considered and used as a teaching station, around which groups of students rotate during the instructional periods. Teaching stations involving program subjects other than those related to natural science, can be established at other convenient and appropriate sites, within the environmental area. Teaching stations are identified with the subject of instruction at the particular station.

A comprehensive daily time schedule should include allotted time periods for every activity or subject which occurs during the visitation to the environmental area. Time allotments which relate to the instructional periods should be great enough in number so that it is possible for every student to receive instruction at each of the established teaching stations during the course of the day. Time allotments also have to be scheduled for

non-instructional activities, such as the lunch period and a time needed for clean up of the area and preparation for the return trip to school. It will be necessary for each student section within the total group, to have its own specific time schedule to follow during the course of the day.

Each member of the instructional staff as well as any supervisory personnel should have definite assignments and responsibilities for which they are accountable. The instructional staff is assigned to those teaching stations for which they are best qualified and knowledgeable. In the event that it is impossible to man a teaching station because of a lack of knowledgeable personnel in that particular instructional area, additional staff assistance should be sought from other levels or departments within the school system. There is usually a wealth of instructional talent related to most educational fields within a districts' professional staff, this talent should be solicited and made available to implement and assist the participating day camping staff with their instructional assignments. An efficiently planned assignment schedule for the teaching staff, determines to a great extent the value of the instructional phase of the over-all day camping program.

ORIENTATION PROGRAMS

There are three phases of orientation and planning associated with most educational projects. These important planning phases are identified as the pre-planning, the experience at the day-camping area and the post planning periods. The degree of success to which the project might result, depends upon the thoroughness of the planning and orientation program, particularly, the initial pre-planning stage. Every facet of the program should be covered in detail during the pre-planning sessions. Student committees must be formed and assigned specific responsibilities that relate to the organization and conduct of the trip. Details and plans for the operation of non-instructional activities should be carefully checked. The matter of lunch and its preparation, arrangements for

transportation to and from the school, clean up assignments, care and responsibility of equipment and supplies necessary for use on the trip and provision for first aid supplies and accident care are all important detailed aspects of the program that need attention prior to the group movement to the outdoor area.

Provision should be made for the immediate change and alteration of plans and procedures as a result of unforseen situations arising during the course of the program activities at the environmental area. It is during the pre-planning stage that the program objectives are determined and defined. It is during this phase of the planning that the total program must be considered in light of the other two planning phases and that a definite relationship is established between objectives, program and the evaluation process which is to be put into effect. The pre-planning phase should, therefore, result in a well planned and sequential total program.

The period in which the student group is at the site is the time when all previously assigned duties and responsibilities are carried out as planned during pre-planning sessions. The actual program as carried on at the environmental area will reflect upon the thoroughness of the pre-planning program.

The post planning orientation phase of the program, which follows the actual experience at the instructional site, becomes the important consideration upon returning to the classroom. Evaluative processes must be in effect at all times in order to determine the value and meaningfulness of the day-camping experience. The post planning evaluation program should, to the greatest degree possible, indicate documented evidence of results. Statistics, figures and testing data must formulate the basis for an objective answer to the questions, "Did the student benefit from the day-camping experience?" Were the planned objectives adequately realized as a result of the environmental program?

Evaluative information and data should be forthcoming from all individuals, including parents, who are involved in any way with the day-camping program. Evaluation questionnaire forms and tests are appropriative for use in the post-planning phase in addition to the use of the interview and theme writing technique. Evaluation tests and forms are more appropriate if developed and formulated to meet the local situation and needs. It is only as a result of a documented evaluation program that the true value of the day-camping program can be determined insofar as the individual student participant is concerned.

SCHOOL POLICY DAY-CAMPING PROGRAM

Many problems are eliminated if not solved as a result of a sound and thorough policy program which relates directly to the conduct of students participating in the day-camping program. School sponsored policies can be identified as rules and regulations and or procedures which guide the actions and attitudes of students while involved in the several phases of the outdoor program. Regulations governing the care and respect of the natural resources and ecology of the area, procedures for keeping the area clean and free of litter, rules and regulations which protect the student from physical injury or harm while in the out-of-doors are most important and essential. Suggested guides which deal with inter-group courtesies make for a more pleasant and meaningful experience and contribute greatly to the human relationship values of the program. Suggestions and procedures governing the building and extinguishing of cooking fires should be included in the pre-trip planning sessions. Any other policies, suggestions or regulations that will make for a more efficient, safe and educational experience are beneficial and necessary.

COMMENTS

The day-camping activities serve in a dual capacity to the implementation of a comprehensive school environmental program. In many situations, this type

of class level program is considered as an intermediate step between the visitations to local school environmental sites or the conventional field trip and the resident camping experience. Secondly, the financial responsibility or expense for the day-camping program is of a much lesser consideration than for other environmental projects.

Furthermore, the day-camping experience in most cases, provides the student with a greater appreciation and understanding of the more local environmental problems that are in existence, closer to home. It serves as a very worthwhile basic technique for instilling within the mind of the student the necessary interest and concern for his or her environment.

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